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ABSTRACT

The lack of a sound curriculum in the social sciences in the public schools is deplored in this position paper. This lack is attributed to poor teacher training in the subject, defective communication between the school and community, and with government grant-giving agencies. It is stated that communities are fearful of introducing relevant social studies because of their controversial character. Three approaches to remedy these problems are proposed based on a social science program for grades 1-6: the fundamental ideas of social sciences can be related to youth's experiences on different grade levels; development of teacher training programs to improve social competence and understanding of social science disciplines is essential; community awareness can be developed through the use of community profiles that will identify the values and standards that comprise the students' background and possible future life styles. Recommendations are made on priorities to be considered in developing a sound curriculum following these approaches. (JD)

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The Hopes and Frustrations of an Innovator Developing a Social Science Education System

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Abstract

The social science curriculum is in deep trouble.

The National Science Foundation is compelled by the U.S. Congress to reevaluate its program. Accountability and need assessment programs ignore the need for development of social competence. Pressures from the community to spend more time on basic skills are growing. Communities are fearful of introducing relevant social science programs because of their controversial character.

Responsibility for the crisis lies with teacher-training, with defective communication between school and community, with the liberal arts colleges, and with the government grant-giving agencies which are lacking in system awareness.

This is the environment in which the author developed a three-pronged approach to social science education.

1. Material development: Our Working World. A six grades social science program based on the hypothesis that the fundamental ideas of social sciences can be related to youth's experiences on the different grade levels.
   This program faced many difficulties: lack of subject matter of the teacher; lack of teachers' ability to judge student readiness for conceptualization; the anxiety of teachers facing innovation; separation of the curriculum into skill and content; lack of teachers' ability to adjust national projects to local needs.
   To correct these difficulties, in-service training programs were financed by federal grants. Unfortunately, the costs far exceeded the benefits, largely because of the deficient training the teachers acquired in colleges.
2. Development of teacher training programs to improve social competence supported by the National Science Foundation. The essence of the program was to present the structures of the social science disciplines, and practice with students in laboratories to determine how to use the analytical tools in problem-solving situations and how to relate the fundamental ideas of the social sciences to the life experiences of youth. The program could not elicit support from the School of Education.
3. Development of community awareness through the use of community profiles. The program is the basis for a national system-based social science curriculum.
   The author recommends the following priorities for support: conceptualization of knowledge; multidisciplinary approach; development of future awareness; new design for teacher training; support of creative minds; training science educators; establishment of twenty regional education centers.

The social science curriculum in our public schools is in a critical stage. The National Science Foundation has almost entirely stopped the distribution of grants for the development of creative curriculum projects. The Man: A Course of Study project generated a nation-wide crisis and an increasing antagonism for and fear of curriculum development. Accountability and need-assessment programs operating in most of the states and school systems ignore the development of social competence because the latter cannot be "measured".

Pressures from the community to spend more time in teaching basic skills in the elementary grades undermine the progress of new social studies programs. Also, social sciences in many communities are considered controversial and school administrators feel uncomfortabel with a relevant social science program.

The responsibility for the crisis in social science education lies in:

1. Teacher training which has not prepared future teachers adequately for conceptualization of knowledge and the application of concepts to the life experience of youth.

2. School administrations which are either timorous or unaware of the need to explain the goals of social science education to the community.

3. Liberal arts colleges which have long-standing antagonism or indifference to teacher training, and which have refused to

serve as a supporting system in the training of teachers.

4. Government grant-giving agencies which do not coordinate among themselves the distribution of funds. They have given grants to fragmented projects without recognizing the improvement as a part of the vast system in which participation of the community, preparation of future teachers, preparation of materials for marketing, development of creative leadership, encouragement of harmony between town and gown, and knowing and ways of knowing are all interrelated and make up an intricate and sensitive system.

The erosion of the social science curriculum takes place at a time when our social system is facing an unprecedented challenge. The economic system, for 200 years committed to economic growth, now faces a chronic raw materials and energy shortage, as well as the high social costs of environmental deterioration.

The political system faces the uncertainty created by the ever increasing power of the executive branch of government and the increasing apathy of the public.

The cultural system faces challenge because many of our value commitments to ideals such as material advancement, competition, hard work, equal opportunity, individualism, pragmatism, and the family as a basic institution, are all being challenged.

Innovators have responded to these challenges, but the question I have is: Do the benefits to society and the educational system equal the high costs in energy and commitment of innovators and the money spent by foundations and publishing companies?

A Case Study

I developed the concept of the organic curriculum and am the author of Our Working World[1], grades one through six.

The organic curriculum is based on the hypothesis that children's experiences are potentially so meaningful that they can be related to the fundamental ideas of the social science disciplines, of economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, social psychology, and the search for justice.

As the author of Our Working World, I was interested in developing value awareness, social-reality awareness, problem awareness, system awareness, time awareness, spatial awareness, career awareness, knowledge awareness and future awareness.

The following conditions stimulated the author to develop such a project:

1. The lack of interest among college students for abstract ideas; their lack of ability to intellectualize the social process; the narrow range and shallowness of earlier social studies curricula, the basis of which was identification of "minimum" understandings;

2. the narrow interpretation of the spiral learning theory which assumed that learning must start with simple experience and move progressively toward abstraction instead of developing a continuing interplay between experience and abstraction at all age levels; putting children exclusively on a diet of experience without showing them the design which underlies the seemingly chaotic world. Such an unbalanced diet can alienate youth in later years from analytical thinking;

3. the early social studies curriculum which had no clear identity and which lacked theoretical underpinning of the various social science disciplines.

All the above conditions led me to Elkhart, Indiana, in 1958, which is in the neighborhood of Purdue University where I was a member of the Economics Department. I proposed to the superintendent of the Elkhart schools an experimental economic education project for the elementary grades. The purpose of the project was to test the hypo-

thesis of the organic curriculum (see page 2).

The Elkhart schools superintendent accepted the proposition. He opened to me not only the door to the classrooms but also to the community. Week after week he and I attended civic clubs and PTA meetings, where I spoke or demonstrated with children how to relate complex economic concepts to young people's experiences. On one or two occasions the president of Purdue University and the dean of the Kronnert Graduate School of Industrial Administration visited Elkhart to demonstrate their support for the project.

The alliance between school administrators, teachers, university faculty, parents, the children, and the rest of the community made the program known as the Elkhart Project, which was reported in the local and national press. The business community of Elkhart was convinced that with increasing economic competence the youth would develop a greater respect for the American economic system. The president of one Elkhart corporation financed scholarships for graduate assistants and underwrote most of the expenses for the project. The cost of developing the conceptualization of the organic curriculum was underwritten by the Carnegie Corporation in 1959 after the foundation undertook a national dragnet operation to identify the most creative social science projects in American public schools. It is interesting to note that at one point in the negotiations a staff member of the Carnegie Corporation asked: "Professor, do you have any evaluating mechanism that will indicate if your ideas will be successful?" When I answered in the negative, he felt that this was the kind of experiment for the Carnegie Corporation to invest its confidence in

the innovator.

In developing the organic curriculum design, I relied largely on my experience with children and upon a few teachers who had the enthusiasm and energy to keep up with the progress of the project and who were willing to open their classrooms for demonstrations. Visitors came from all over the country. Great strength came from the language arts supervisor who could see the potential in the interaction between the learning of language and content. Thanks to the interest of the local press, pride in the project grew.

There were difficulties to overcome. For example:

1. Lack of subject matter competence of elementary and secondary school teachers.

2. Lack of the ability of teachers to judge the readiness of youth to comprehend economic concepts. Teachers were inclined to judge students' readiness or lack of it by their own competence. If the teacher comprehended the concepts, he declared the youth ready. If the teacher did not comprehend the concepts, he declared the youth not ready.

3. The limited ability of teachers to develop teaching strategies.

4. The anxiety of teachers when faced with innovations. Special strategies had to be developed to overcome these anxieties which could even grow into resentment. Sample teaching materials were prepared.

In 1962, the president of Science Research Associates was keenly interested in the quality of education and innovative methods of teaching. Previous to this time, my only ambition was to prepare a series of teachers' guides to be published by the Columbia Teachers' College press. The contact with Science Research Associates transformed this plan into a basic social studies series in economic education. In 1964-1965, the first edition of Our Working World[2] was pub-

lished.

My motives for preparing these materials extended beyond developing economic competence in children. I wanted to encourage American children to participate in their democratic society built on values of liberty, justice, domestic tranquility, and the general welfare.

The teachers' and students' response to the series was favorable. The press, from Esquire Magazine to Business Week, Time and Look Magazine, reported enthusiastically on the program.

As time went on, the author, with growing concern, observed a gap between his ideals and the use of the materials. The teachers' guides carried a broad range of classroom activities so that teachers could select from them according to their students' readiness and cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately, too many teachers fell back to the use of the textbook and making little use of the author's innovative activities or of their own initiative.

Newly-hired teachers were not prepared to use newly-developed social science programs, including my own. Almost all nationally distributed science and social science projects had developed outside the domain of the teacher-training institutions. These institutions for a long time hardly took notice of the existence of new innovative programs.

When I visited classrooms I learned that teachers separate the learning of skills from the learning of knowledge. Despite the fact that the Our Working World textbooks I and II were largely made up of pictures, well-suited to develop reading readiness, the teachers

argued that they could not use the books until children knew how to read and write. Few teachers were willing and able to combine skill-learning and content-learning.

It seems that the publishing company salesmen are the most important line of communication between innovators and teachers. The salesmen sell their wares on the basis of sales pitch. Their sales pitch varies according to the priorities established by the community or the state for the goals of economic education. In one state, the emphasis may be consumer education, in another, the emphasis is career development; and in another, the business system is emphasized. The salesmen play the different tunes, while the large score, composed by the innovators, is ignored. The salesmen should not be accused of narrow vision or narrow-mindedness. The authorities confine them to the strait jacket.

From Economic Education to Social Science Education

To help youth become problem-solvers in their own land, I decided that youth needed to be made aware of the many dimensions of problems. Problems such as inflation or unemployment have, besides their economic aspects, political, sociological, psychological, and cultural dimensions.

In order to develop a broad multidisciplinary project, it was necessary to first develop a theoretical structure. In 1963 the National Science Foundation gave a grant, not to develop a curriculum project, but to establish a consortium of leading social scientists who would identify the fundamental ideas of the social science disci-

plines and who would show how these disciplines could be related to young people's lives. Eminent social scientists worked together to accomplish the task. This was the beginning of the Social Science Education Consortium which was formed at Purdue University. Social scientists who were never before interested in education now became involved with identifying the structures of their disciplines. Working together and also with people like me who are interested in curriculum development, they discovered that knowing and ways of knowing are two sides of the same coin. The great strength of the consortium has been that it has never received funds for curriculum development. It has not been preoccupied with royalties, copyrights, and marketing. The consortium's sole purpose was and is to develop new ideas and place them in the public domain.

Science curriculum projects financed by public funds and protected by author's copyright have provoked much antagonism in the educational community and in the publishing industry.

In 1966 the Social Science Education Consortium organized a national conference on structuring the social science disciplines. The results were structures of the various social sciences which were reproduced in many social science methods texts and which were used as the foundation for social science curricula all over the country.

I used these structures in the preparation of a basal social science series; grades one through six, Our Working World, published in 1971 by Science Research Associates. This new series reflected the following objectives:

1. Value awareness and commitment to values rooted in the belief

of the perfectability of man and in the pragmatic philosophy.

2. Social reality awareness.

3. Problem awareness based on the recognition that a social problem results from the gap between value commitment and reality.

4. System awareness based on the recognition that our social system is a goal-oriented, learning system.

5. Time awareness based on the recognition that historical forces are shaping our present behavior.

6. Spatial awareness, especially community awareness.

7. Career awareness based on the recognition that there should be harmony between the individual's value preferences and his career choice.

8. Knowledge awareness so that youth can recognize the theoretical structure underlying the social process.

9. Future awareness, so as to help youth appraise trends and reappraise the values necessary in planning for and possibly creating options for the future.

Serious difficulties arose in the proper use of the project. The teachers did not work together. They did not compare notes, and so continuity was lacking. Many teachers relied for the most part on the textbook. Teachers lacked the ability to adjust the materials to their local needs. Many felt there was not enough time for social studies because the day had to be divided into clearly distinguishable periods for the various skills and subject matter.

With the aid of the federal government, summer in-service training programs, sometimes called leadership training programs, were organized throughout the country to help teachers use nationally recognized social science programs.

Unfortunately, it was discovered that the teachers lacked not only the new knowledge necessary to use the innovative project proper-

ly but also the fundamental understandings necessary to teach any social studies program. So, the in-service institute became the repair shop of defective teacher-training programs instead of helping teachers to keep their knowledge and teaching strategies up to date to deal with new inventions and innovations.

Many in-service training programs demonstrated the following limitations:

1. The staff discovered that the knowledge of the teachers was so limited that there was very little basis to build on.

2. The programs were split according to content and methodology. It was hard to find staff who were capable of integrating knowledge and methodology.

3. The teachers who participated in the leadership training programs often lacked leadership qualities. Those who had such qualities were not offered a proper environment by their school administration to carry out their role as change agents.

4. In many school systems there was a cultural gap between the school administration and the innovating teachers; also, a gap between the innovating teachers and the community. In many cases, no provisions were made to close the gap. The projects were never presented or demonstrated as a whole to the community, and the only way the community learned of the projects was from the fragmented information delivered by the students to their parents. This sometimes led to misunderstandings between the school and the community.

Developing a Design for the Training of Teachers in the Social Sciences

I concluded that a fundamental reform in teacher training is needed. Teacher training must be related to community needs. Teacher training institutions should be aware of new knowledge which is being developed for the school curriculum. Teacher training institutions should prepare young teachers to use, evaluate, and adjust new projects.

In 1970 I applied to the National Science Foundation for a grant to introduce an experimental social science program at the University of Colorado. The essence of the program was to present the structures of the social science disciplines, and practice with students in laboratories to determine how to use the analytical tools in problem-solving situations and how to relate the fundamental ideas of the social sciences to the life experiences of youth. Students assigned to the laboratories selected one of the following topics: Cities, Education, Conflict, Women, Environment, or the Future. Reading materials were compiled dealing with the economical, political, sociological, psychological, and anthropological dimensions of each topic. The program is still going on in the liberal arts college; however, the program could not elicit support from the School of Education because the School of Education cannot identify education majors early enough. The program is currently attracting more than 100 students but only a handful of these come from the School of Education. Many undergraduate students in this program become so interested in education that as a result of the course they decide to become teachers.

Developing a Design for Community Awareness

The teacher training program ignores the development in future teachers of awareness of the community at large and of its needs. Teachers do not know how to utilize the community as a laboratory or how to help youth increase their options in the community where they grow up or to which they may migrate.

Communities change over time. Small trading towns die. Many rural and small towns are swallowed up by an expanding megalopoli:

Communities are changing in space. The uneven rate of change stimulates migration. Every day thousands of people leave rural areas and migrate to big cities. Among these migrants are young people. What these people find is that this country is not a melting pot but a bewildering kaleidoscope of values and life styles. Youth must be prepared for these temporal and spatial changes so as to increase their options at home or where they may migrate.

Our schools must provide young people with information and expose them to experiences which will enable them to make more intelligent decisions in time and space. These decisions may relate to the following questions:

1. Should I settle down in the community where I was born?
2. How did my community change during my parents' lifetime and how is it changing now?
3. What are the reasons for these changes?
4. What niche can I occupy in my community?
5. How can I make best use of my talents to make my community a better place to live?
6. What are my chances in other communities?
7. How can I prepare myself to land in other communities with the same assurance that astronauts landed on the moon?
8. How can I make full use of the new opportunities offered by big urban communities?
9. What is the future of my community and the other community where I may settle down?
10. What are the costs and benefits of staying or moving somewhere else?

It is my conviction that the community and the school system must work together to help youth to face these questions. Community and school systems must form a friendly alliance to help youth consider the answers to these questions. Recognizing these needs, I submitted in 1974 a proposal to the National Science Foundation for a planning grant. The essence of the proposal was to identify twenty or twenty-five communities of different economic, political, and cultural complexities. The project would help each of these twenty or twenty-five communities to develop its own social profile, which would serve as a tool for educational decision-making. A rural-declining community must develop a different social competence for youth than a growing-industrial community. A chicano urban community must develop a different competence for youth than a high-income suburban community.

The National Science Foundation approved the planning grant. Three experimental communities were chosen: a rural-mining-growing community, a rural-farming-declining community, and a one-industry static community. The social profiles have been prepared.[4] Educational goals and curriculum objectives have been identified and teaching units prepared.

One of my most exciting professional experiences has been to work with rank and file community members to interpret the social profile, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the community and help them to identify the educational goals for the future. I have found that, throughout the country, citizens' groups, appointed by the accountability acts to identify educational goals or by

school systems to assess educational needs, are unprepared for their tasks. Neither the state departments of education nor the school systems prepare these citizen groups. The purpose of this project has been to strengthen the relationship between the school system and the community.

Unfortunately, the National Science Foundation, having difficulties at present with the U.S. Congress, does not want to renew the program because "It does not meet a national need".

Recommendations

To many of the issues raised in the documents of the National Institute of Education I have responded from my own experience. To these issues expecting an either/or response, I do not think it is appropriate to respond. The issues which the Institute raised are all parts of the large mosaic of American education. Each issue is important in relation to the whole.

I have three general observations to make:

1. Federal involvement is imperative. Federal funds make it possible to enlist national leaders and to consider the interests of the entire nation.

2. The resource allocation of federal agencies should be closely coordinated within one system and with commonly agreed-on goals.

3. Resources should be allocated in such a way that they strengthen both the unifying and the pluralistic forces of our society. The geographic and social mobility need the unifying force. The geographic and cultural variety in this large country need the pluralistic forces.

I think that the time has come when no further resources are needed to clarify issue and priorities. Such a dialog should be kept up continuously by the professional associations.

From my own experiences, I recommend the following priorities for support:

1. Individual innovators or team of innovators who can make contributions in the field of conceptualizing knowledge and who can relate knowledge meaningfully to the life experiences of youth at different age levels.

2. Innovators or team of innovators who can build the bridge between social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities.

3. Innovators who will help youth develop future awareness.

4. Teams of scholars and educators who will develop new teacher training designs to meet the dynamic changes in society caused by science, technology, and changing value preferences.

5. Innovative projects which bring together different grant-giving agencies to work as a team and not as rivals.

6. Establishment of twenty regional educational centers which will serve as yardstick operations for a social science system-based curriculum. These centers could coordinate the following tasks:

   a. Preparation of social profiles of the home communities and communities to which the youth may migrate.

   b. Training of educational and community leaders to use these social profiles for educational decision-making.

   c. Identification of opportunities for work and citizenship experiences which will encourage students to identify with the community.

   d. Training of teachers to translate educational goals of the community into the classroom.

   e. Building of feed-back channels to the state universities and other teacher-training institutions so that these institutions can keep up-to-date with the needs of the community.

   f. Bringing together of the best brains in the area to keep track of the dynamic changes in the home community as well as in communities relevant to the youths' future.

   g. Demonstrations of creative classroom activities and distribution of information of such activities in writing and

in regional in-service programs. Much creative teaching takes place in classrooms throughout the country, but there is no communication system nor reward system.

h. Development of manuals and readings for members of the community to help them understand better the purposes of education and innovations, and also to help them to develop a long-range outlook necessary for educational decision-making.

i. Development of evaluating mechanisms to measure social competence.

j. Establishment of a clearing house of information on new curriculum development and creative classroom practices for the twenty educational centers.

7. Creative minds but not confining them to the letter of the guidelines. Too often the guidelines discourage innovators and encourage the grantsmen.

8. Graduate programs in which science educators are trained to integrate the disciplines and teaching strategies.

Footnotes

1. Our Working World, 6 vols. (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1971). 2nd ed. Vol. 1: "Families"; Vol. 2: "Neighborhoods"; Vol. 3: "Cities"; Vol. 4: "Regions of the United States"; Vol. 5: "The American Way of Life"; Vol. 6: "Regions of the World". (Each volume includes a textbook, a teacher's guide, and a problem book; grades one and two include phonograph records; grade three includes filmstrips; grades four, five, and six include satellite kits of readings.)

2. Our Working World, 3 vols. (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1964-65). 1st ed. Vol. 1: "Families at Work"; Vol. 2: "Neighborhoods at Work"; Vol. 3: "Cities at Work". (Each volume includes textbook, teacher's guides and problem book. Grades one and two include phonograph records; volume three includes a filmstrip.)

3. UPSTEP: (Undergraduate Pre-Service Teacher Education Program) An occasional paper.

4. The Colorado System-Based Curriculum Project, by Lawrence Senesh et al. (Boulder, Colorado, 1976). 62 pages.